



eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 2, Issue 8 :: [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
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Murkowski Helps Kick-Off American Heart Association Lobby Day

I was pleased to join representatives from the American Heart Association to help kick off their Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day on May 16. Hundreds of volunteers, as well as heart disease and stroke survivors, met with elected officials in Congress to ask them to support legislative efforts to combat cardiovascular disease. I am an original sponsor of the HEART for Women Act – a bipartisan initiative aimed at improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and stroke in women.

One in three adult women suffers from some form of cardiovascular disease, and heart disease kills more women than the next five causes of death combined. In Alaska, nearly 27 percent of all deaths in women are due to cardiovascular disease. It is not necessarily an older person's disease: 35 percent of all heart disease deaths in Alaska occur among people under the age of 65. The Heart for Women Act takes a three-pronged approach to reducing the cardiovascular disease death rate for women, through improved health education, gender specific analysis and research, and increased access to screening for women. The bill would expand the WISEWOMAN program to all 50 states, providing free screening for heart disease and stroke for low-income women. Today, only 14 states have WISEWOMAN programs, including two programs in Alaska.



Honored at the Heart and Stroke Lobby Day

Murkowski Introduces Rural Physicians Relief Act

Last week I joined Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) in introducing the "Rural Physicians' Relief Act of 2006." This legislation will both assist physicians who currently provide primary care in rural America and provide an incentive to encourage physicians to practice in these remote and underserved areas.

Physicians who provide health care in the most rural locations in American face challenges unlike their more urban counterparts. As a result, many of these areas tend to be the most medically underserved areas in the nation – areas where medical care is often urgently needed. It is my hope that our efforts will encourage physicians to practice in rural Alaska and throughout rural America.

The Rural Physicians Relief Act of 2006 will give a physician who is a primary health services provider a \$1,000 tax credit for each month that he or she provides services in a designated “frontier” area. In addition, physicians who treat a high percentage of patients from frontier areas would also be eligible for the tax credit.



A Rally with Physicians Outside the Capitol

Senate Passes Legislation to Provide Suicide Prevention in Rural Alaska

On May 11, the United States Senate passed legislation I cosponsored aimed at preventing suicide among teenagers living on Indian reservations and in rural Alaska villages. The bill, introduced by Senators Dorgan and McCain, would authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to direct \$6 million for a four-year demonstration project aimed at increasing the availability of mental health and counseling services for Indians and Alaska Natives. The grant would fund five tribes or tribal organizations that demonstrate a need to address youth suicide or that are isolated and have limited access to mental health services. The project expands the availability of health services delivered through telecommunications technology in order to provide more counseling and suicide-prevention materials to rural tribal communities.

Murkowski Joins Bipartisan Effort to Eliminate Medicare Late Enrollment Penalty

I joined a bipartisan effort in the U.S. Senate to eliminate the late enrollment penalty for those patients who wait to sign up for the Medicare prescription drug benefit until later this year. Currently, Medicare patients who did not meet the May 15th deadline to enroll for the drug benefit would pay an additional monthly fee if they chose to sign up at a later date. The Medicare Late Enrollment Assistance Act of 2006 will ensure that those patients who need prescription drug coverage will be able to enroll this year without facing an additional financial burden.

In addition to waiving the enrollment penalty for 2006, the Act will provide \$13 million in new funding for State Health Insurance Information Programs and another \$5 million for Area Agencies on Aging to provide beneficiaries assistance in enrolling in the drug benefit program. This new funding will be distributed based on the number of rural Medicare beneficiaries and those eligible for the low-income subsidy. The cost of waiving the late enrollment penalty in 2006 is offset with funds that previously were set aside by Congress to encourage health insurance company participation in the Medicare program.

If you have not yet enrolled in the program and need help you can access information at:

Medicare

1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or www.medicare.gov

State of Alaska SeniorCare Medicare Information Line

(907) 269-3680 or 1-800-478-6065 (statewide) or their [website](#)

May 14th Named National Police Survivors Day

In honor of the families of fallen police officers, I offered Senate Resolution 473 which designates May 14th as National Police Survivors Day. The resolution is intended to engage all of our fellow citizens to lend a hand to the survivors of our police heroes.

The date chosen has significance for many families. On May 14, 2003, on the eve of the National Peace Officers' Memorial Service, 10 widows of fallen law enforcement officers came together. Out of this meeting came the birth of a new national organization called Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS). One year later, COPS was formed at the first National Police Survivors Seminar which drew 110 law enforcement survivors. Today, COPS provides healing, love and the opportunity for a renewed life to over 15,000 families through a network of 48 chapters around the country.

Murkowski Bids Farewell to College Intern

Next week will conclude the term for the first intern selected under my new college intern program. Roseann Simko will be returning to Alaska where she will finish her degree at UAF and prepare to enter law school. Roseann had this to say about her experiences, "I extend my gratitude to Senator Lisa Murkowski and her welcoming staff for the array of DC experiences that will certainly last a lifetime! Most memorable is the day spent with the Senator as her shadow, and the unforgettable events I attended. I learned more in a few months than could encompass a year of college; every part was worthwhile."

If you are interested in applying for an internship in my office visit the [internship section of my website](#).

Great Living Alaskan – D.J. DeRego

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids announced the winners of the 2006 Youth Advocates of the Year Awards, an annual competition that honors young people who have made outstanding contributions to tobacco prevention. The youth advocates will receive educational scholarships and grants to continue their tobacco prevention efforts and serve as ambassadors for the Campaign. I am pleased that they selected D.J. DeRego of Juneau as the West Region Youth Advocate of the Year.

D.J. is a freshman at Juneau Douglas High School and is a leader within his local youth coalition, Juneau Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU). D.J. helped to strengthen Juneau's smoke-free law by testifying before the city assembly, and he continues to advocate that the assembly tighten a

loophole in the ordinance. The loophole allows bars and restaurants with bar areas to choose to allow smoking if they limit their patrons to those age 18 and older. D.J. has also worked with other TATU members to write a public service announcement that was broadcast on a local radio station and helped to organize a display of 1,200 empty pairs of shoes to symbolize the 1,200 Americans who die every day because of tobacco for the Tobacco-Free Kids' Kick Butts Day. Through his work with TATU, D.J. has had the opportunity to present to students in elementary and middle schools throughout the Juneau area, reaching hundreds of young people with his message.

For more information about the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and how you can get involved visit www.tobaccofreekids.org.



Meeting with D.J. During his Trip to Washington, D.C.

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Washington, D.C. Office 709 Hart Senate Building Washington D.C., 20510 202-224-6665

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